



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **STATE LEGISLATORS HEADED TO THE CLASSROOM**

### **LAWMAKERS MAKE PLANS TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL BACK TO SCHOOL WEEK**

As summer ends and school children around the state settle in for another year of classes, Louisiana's state legislators are making plans to go back to the classroom as well.

Louisiana lawmakers will join their counterparts around the country for America's Legislators Back to School Week, September 16-20. Back to School Week is a bipartisan event designed to teach young people - the nation's future voters and leaders-what it's like to be a state legislator: the processes, the pressures, and the debate, negotiation and compromise that are the very fabric of representative democracy.

The program is a product of the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) civic education initiative, the Trust for Representative Democracy. Based on the ideas and fundamental principles set forth by the framers of the Constitution, the Trust is designed to engage young people and build their understanding and support for America's democratic institutions.

Beginning as a pilot program in 1999, the program was expanded from a day to a week in 2001 to allow legislators and educators more flexibility in scheduling classroom visits. More than 2,500 legislators nationwide participated in the program in 2001.

Last year 87 Louisiana legislators visited over 160 schools and spoke to over 8000

students. This years's participation will be even better. At this time, over 100 of Louisiana's 144 legislators have signed up to participate in the program by visiting classes in their districts. Other legislators are in the process of finalizing schools visits. Since the inception of the program, Louisiana has had one of the highest legislator participation rates in the nation.

The program is endorsed and supported by civic organizations and the education community, including the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard and the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana.

Other organizations that support the program and are working in a cooperative effort with Louisiana state legislators on the Back to School project are the Louisiana School Boards Association, Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, Louisiana Association of Principals, Louisiana Association of Educators, Louisiana Federation of Teachers and the Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana.

In 2001, the House and Senate Public Information offices received a Lantern Award of Excellence from the Southern Public Relations Federation for Louisiana's Back to School Program.

More information on the program may be obtained online through NCSL at [www.ncsl.org/public/backsch.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/public/backsch.htm) or at the Louisiana Legislature's homepage [www.legis.state.la.us](http://www.legis.state.la.us) where you can also view the school visit schedule for House and Senate members.

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**ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS: To schedule interviews with legislators for advance stories or coverage of the school visits in your area, please contact Sheila McCant (225-342-9795) for House members and Brenda Hodge (225-342-9737) for Senate members. Additionally, audio clips featuring comments from Senate President John Hainkel and Senate Education Committee Chairman Jerry Theunissen are available online at <http://senate.legis.state.la.us/>**